Marine Life Protection Act Initiative



Developing a System of Marine Protected Areas in California: An Introduction to the MLPA and MLPA Initiative

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Overview

- An introduction to the Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA) and marine protected areas
- An introduction to the MLPA Initiative, a marine protected area planning process
- Important process change for the MLPA North Coast Study Region



Marine Protected Areas

State Marine Conservation Area (SMCA)

- Prohibits some recreational and/or commercial extractive activities
- State Marine Park (SMP)
 - Prohibits all commercial extractive activities and potentially some recreational activities.
- State Marine Reserve (SMR)
 - Prohibits all extractive activities





Why Marine Protected Areas?

Marine protected areas (MPAs) can:

- Protect habitat and ecosystems
- Conserve biological diversity
- Maintain culturally significant resources
- Enhance recreational and educational opportunities
- Provide research opportunities
- Complement fisheries management





Why the Marine Life Protection Act?

- California's over 80 MPAs were created piecemeal over decades without a coherent plan, scientific guidelines, overall goals
- California's extraordinary marine biological diversity a vital asset
- Marine protected areas offer multiple benefits for sustaining ocean ecosystems
- Marine reserves are an essential element of an MPA network
- MPAs should be designed and managed according to conversation-based goals





Marine Life Protection Act

- Signed into California law in 1999
 - Improve the design and management of marine protected areas (MPAs) in state waters
 - Focuses on marine ecosystems and habitats rather than single species
- Requires, in part:
 - Use "best readily available science"
 - Involvement of stakeholders and other interested parties
 - Marine Life Protection Program with six goals and adaptive management
 - Master plan for MPAs and master plan "science" team



Six Goals of MLPA

- To protect the natural diversity and abundance of marine life, and the structure, function and integrity of marine ecosystems
- To help sustain, conserve, and protect marine life populations, including those of economic value, and rebuild those that are depleted
- To improve recreational, educational and study opportunities provided by marine ecosystems that are subject to minimal human disturbance, and to manage these uses in a manner consistent with protecting biodiversity
- To protect marine natural heritage, including protection of representative and unique marine life habitats in California waters for their intrinsic value
- To ensure that California's MPAs have clearly defined objectives, effective management measures, and adequate enforcement, and are based on sound scientific guidelines
- 6. To ensure that the state's MPAs are designed and managed, to the extent possible, as a network



Guidance Document

California Marine Life Protection Act Master Plan for Marine Protected Areas (January 2008)

- Process for redesigning MPAs
- Science guidance, including species likely to benefit, levels of protection, habitat representation and replication, and MPA size and spacing
- Setting goals and objectives
- Education, outreach, and enforcement
- Monitoring and adaptive management
- Long-term funding
- MPAs for each study region
- Flexibility

Mean high tide to

3 nautical miles

offshore

Flexibility in MPA Design

* The diversity of species and habitats to be protected, and the diversity of human uses of marine environments, prevents a single optimum network design in all environments.



* Science guidance from the California Marine Life Protection Act Master Plan for Marine Protected Areas











